

# Weekly Market Bulletin

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## From Your Commissioner...

### The Early Weeder Gets the Hairy Galinsoga

What's up with this hairy galinsoga, avid gardener Stanley Weglarz of Franklin wanted to know. He was surprised I didn't know this pesky weed by name, but I recognized it the moment I saw a picture on the internet. In fact, I've pulled quite a few of these unwanted plants out of our vegetable garden, too.

"It's a scourge to farmers of all sizes," Weglarz declared. "It comes later, it grows fast. The seed germinates almost as fast as it hits the ground, and it decreases productivity." He's tried herbicides, and consulted with his county UNH Cooperative Extension educator. He's so discouraged with his unsuccessful efforts to combat the weed that he has decided to seed down his half-acre garden with cover crops of buckwheat and an annual grass to suppress it, and is turning over a new garden plot to start fresh. He will wash all his tools to avoid introducing the pernicious seed into his new ground.

This many-branched, light green plant can grow one to two feet tall, with a spreading habit that shades out other plants. The stems and coarsely toothed leaves are covered with small hairs. Many tiny, daisy-like flowers are produced at the ends of the stems and at the leaf axils. Three-pointed ray petals surround a yellow disk center.

Weglarz is not the only victim of this aggressive weed. Becky Grube, UNH Cooperative Extension sustainable horticulture specialist, has been hearing an increasing number of complaints about hairy galinsoga from growers. It is not new to the region, she says, but seems to be spreading. It has spread worldwide, but has become a nuisance especially in the Northeastern U.S. It is a problem primarily in fertile soils, in vegetable and nursery crops, and some landscape situations. It can be brought in on transplants or equipment. Just a few seeds can start a big problem.

Eric Sideman, crop specialist with MOFGA (Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association), has written that hairy galinsoga is an increasing problem on organic farms. All those little flowers produce a prodigious quantity of seed, which does indeed germinate very quickly. According to Sideman, this summer annual is not day-length sensitive—and can go from germinating seed to producing new seeds in just over a month. "By the time you see the flowers open wide they probably have viable seed in them," he warns. "Pulling up plants with flowers and leaving them in the garden is just adding to the weed seed bank."

There's just no substitute for early and frequent cultivation, advises Becky Grube. Because galinsoga seed has no dormancy, any seeds produced or laying in the seed bank will germinate as soon as conditions are right—exposed to light and sufficient warmth and moisture. This makes galinsoga easier to get rid of than weeds like lambsquarters that have a physiological dormancy, Grube says.

The only good thing about this weed may be its shallow, fibrous roots—which make it easy to pull. "It's easy to control mechanically because it pulls out easily, and dies easily," Grube adds. Repeated, shallow tilling is necessary to keep it in check. For smaller-scale gardeners, Grube recommends putting down plastic or other solid mulch "if you can tolerate it."

Get out your hoes, as hairy galinsoga starts germinating in late May to early June. The scientific name is *Galinsoga ciliata*, but in some areas it's known as quickweed or waterweed, because it spreads over an area so quickly—like water.

**Lorraine Merrill, Commissioner**